

STALINISM VERSUS STALIN

Exorcising a Stubborn Ghost

BERTRAM D. WOLFE

MUCH analysis of the Soviet Union applies, unconsciously, a variant of the myth of "inevitable progress." Since everything changes, runs the argument, the totalist state, too, must change. And since it is hard to imagine anything worse, the change must be for the better.

Every "right feint" in the perpetual reversals of field that accompany the attempt to break through to one and the same goal, has in its day been hailed as the long awaited "inevitable change," the "sobering that comes from the responsibilities of power," the "response to the pressure of reality," the "mellowing process that sooner or later overtakes all militant movements," the "preordained downward curve in the parabola of revolution," the "diffusion of authority which could lead to a constitutional order," the rise of a "rationalist technocracy," or of a "limited and traditionalist despotism," the "inevitable work of erosion upon the totalitarian edifice." (Each of these formulae is quoted from some highly respected authority on Russian affairs.)

As early as 1921, when Lenin introduced the Nep, it was pronounced a yielding to

economic reality and a making of peace with the Russian people. "Socialism in one country" was hailed as a break with the Lenin-Trotsky aim of world revolution. The Constitution of 1936 was the beginning of democracy and a reign of law, and of peace with the Soviet people. "Popular Front" and the Litvinov line were an abandonment of class war, an alliance with progressive countries and parties, a renunciation of the dogma of the inevitability of imperialist war. The Grand Alliance evoked illusions inside as well as outside Russia. The "Geneva Spirit" had scarcely been dispelled when fresh illusions sprang from the 20th Congress and the desanctification of Stalin.

All these expectations of change involve the same two fundamentals: peace with the Soviet people and peace with the world. Which brings us to the essence of totalitarianism—twofold war: an unending one on its own people to re-make them in the image of its blueprint for man; and on the rest of the world to conquer it for Communism.

If it is regarded as but "the latest variant of age-old tyranny and absolutism," totalitarianism cannot be understood at all. Traditional absolutism had as its fundamental aim the maintaining of the status quo: a freezing of the present or a return to the past. But totalitarianism is dedicated to "the future." It has a vested interest in keeping things in flux, in permanent revolution from above: to create as rapidly as the recalcitrant human material will permit, a new man, a new society, and a new world.

Moreover, even the ancient absolutisms had staying powers that the fashionable dogmas of "dynamic sociology" cannot account for. Monarchical absolutism grew and expanded for several centuries. Czarist autocracy lasted for more than three. Oriental

THE significance of the recent 20th Party Congress of the Russian Communist party is here explored by a noted expert in the history of Bolshevism. BERTRAM D. WOLFE was born in 1896 in Brooklyn—where he still lives—and was educated at City College, Columbia, and the University of Mexico. Formerly Chief of the Ideological Advisory Staff of the Voice of America, he has now returned to independent writing. He is the author of a life of Diego Rivera, of the authoritative *Three Who Made a Revolution* (1948), and of the recently published *Six Keys to the Soviet System* (Beacon). His last previous article in these pages was "Professor Carr's 'Wave of the Future'" in March 1955.

despotism survived ebb and flow, invasion and upheaval, for millennia. The key question is whether totalitarianism, too, may not manifest built-in staying powers which, through all the changes so far, have tended to enlarge its fundamental characteristics rather than to "erode" them.

WHEN Joseph Stalin died, Bolshevism was fifty years old. Founded by Lenin in 1903, it had had only two authoritative leaders; they had set upon it, successively, the stamp of their personalities, methods, conceptions. Lenin ruled twenty years, from 1903 to 1923, during the last six of which he also ruled over Russia. Stalin ruled both party and government for thirty years, from 1923 to 1953.

Quite properly, attempts to write a history of the Russian Revolution have had the character of biographical histories. In the more stable context of the 19th century, it was possible for historians to believe that they could write largely in terms of institutions and impersonal forces. But in an age when "movements" assault the citadels of power, subvert the established order, and remake society according to their blueprints, the character, the passions, the ideas, the practices of the founder and shaper of the movement become of prime importance. How can one write of Nazism without Hitler, or of Bolshevism without Lenin and Stalin?

Lenin's Marxism was so different from Marx's, so formed by his personality and the Russian heritage, that the friendly Charles Rappaport dubbed it *marxisme à la tartare*. When Stalin took over Lenin's party machine, government, and doctrine, he set upon them a "Caucasian Mountain" stamp. Yet the changes he introduced involved the enlarging of basic elements in Lenin's doctrine and method, and were made within the framework of Lenin's machine, his monopoly of power, and his determination to transform the world.

Stalin's heirs have inherited a totally atomized society; a completely centralized and "monolithic" party; a single-party state;

a doctrine of infallibility of "the summit"; a completely collectivized and statized agriculture; a powerful, if one-sided, forced-tempo industrialization; the techniques and momentum of a succession of "Five Year Plans," of which the current one is the Sixth; a completely controlled culture; a regime of absolute force and continuous psychological warfare on their own people; a system of promotion, demotion, correction of error, and elimination of difference through permanent purge; a method of advance through zigzags toward unchanging goals; a commitment to permanent revolution from above until the Soviet subject has been re-made and Communism has won the world. It is within this framework that Stalin's heirs have taken over the land where "Socialism has already been achieved and Communism is being built."

THERE is a fundamental difficulty in the leader principle which, as Karl Popper has written,

makes the very idea of selecting future leaders self-contradictory. . . . The authoritarian will select those who obey, who believe, who respond to his influence. But in doing so, he is bound to select mediocrities. . . . Never can an authoritarian admit that the intellectually courageous, i.e., those who defy authority, may be the most valuable. . . .

Even Lenin wondered after one of his purges whether "If you expel all the insufficiently obedient but intelligent people and are left with none but the obedient fools, will you not surely destroy the party?"

Joseph Stalin, less sure of his merits, more reckless with the lives of all who doubted, or who earned his distrust, surrounded himself with more mediocre men. Why, one asks as one studies them, are these men at the head of a great people? What made Molotov and Voroshilov into representatives of "Old Bolshevism" if not that Stalin had killed off their betters? The "new" men at the top in the USSR today are Stalin's men. He owes his place and cult to them, and in a deeper sense they owe their place to him. They made the purges, and were made by

by them. In a time when it took service to the cult, bloody activity, special luck, and an unusual talent for survival, these are the ones that survived.

Molotov, Voroshilov, Kaganovich, Mikoyan, Bulganin, Khrushchev, and Malenkov, who fill seven of the eleven places in the "new" party Presidium, are Stalin's old nine-man Politburo, minus Beria and Stalin. Though they "represent" generations that no longer exist, they have an absolute majority in the Presidium. Pervukhin and Saburov are engineers wholly trained under the new regime, and then turned overseer-politicians. Stalin added them to the Presidium at the 19th Congress.

Since Stalin's death, two more members have been acquired, Kirichenko and Suslov. Both were admitted to the Presidium, not at the "sovereign" 20th Congress, but seven months earlier, at the same time that they, along with three others, were added to Khrushchev's party Secretariat. Thus the Presidium now consists of Stalin's men plus two of Khrushchev's.*

Given a great country with 200,000,000 inhabitants and the world's largest empire to experiment with, the members of the Presidium have learned other trades besides those of faction lieutenant and courtier—just as the subalterns of the beheaded Red Army who took command after its five thousand top officers were purged in 1937-38 finally learned the trade of general after losing to Hitler an empire eighteen times the size of France and an army of over five million men.

But the cult in whose service they rose to positions of power systematically dwarfed them at the same time. The Stalin cult, in its swollen, sky-filling form, could not survive Stalin's death. For what right did such dwarfed men have to be individual or even "collective" dictators? Moreover, in the end they had been irked by Stalin's arrogation of the credit for all they did, thought up, and even ghost-wrote for him. (The real leader-

ship of the USSR was always more "collective" than the cult had admitted while Stalin was alive, or than his surviving collaborators will acknowledge now that they are trying to acquire credit by denouncing it.) And they had been moved to fear and secret hatred by the precariousness of their positions. Their cold funeral addresses testified that Stalin had exacted such exaggerated "posthumous" tribute in life that there was no reserve left to call on after his death.

For six hours and ten minutes they concealed the fact of death while around the corpse they made their calculations, deals, and plans. Then there came from them, not a cry of grief, but of alarm: a call to maintain "steel, monolithic unity . . . political vigilance . . . intolerance against inner and outer foe. . . insure uninterrupted leadership . . . avoid disorder and panic." The first post-Stalin number of *Kommunist* (March 9, 1953) called for "collective work, collective leadership, and monolithic unity." Eighteen days after the greatest genius of all lands and times had breathed his last, an issue of *Pravda* appeared without a single mention of his name. Thus the struggle with Stalin's ghost, discovered by our press at the 20th Congress, began before the corpse was cold.

IN A land where absolute power is supposed to permit the control of all things spiritual and material, "Operation Cutdown" was intended to be carefully timed, spaced out, controlled, and planned. They tried out the ghost for size, experimented with different formulae, skipped the commemoration of one of his birthdays altogether, then gave him considerable praise on the next.

In the fashion he himself had taught them, they unloaded on him responsibility for those parts of the Stalinist program or tactics which had become outmoded. Thus Stalin had borrowed American technique in the thirties and used American military help in the forties, but when the Soviet armies came back from the West stirred by what they had seen, Stalin and his band had to start a great drive against "kow-towing to

*For an analysis of the Candidate (Alternate) members of the Presidium, and particularly Zhukov, see the writer's article in the forthcoming July 1956 *Foreign Affairs*.

the West" and "cosmopolitanism," at the risk of having their absurd claims that Russians had invented everything prevent for a while their learning further from Western technique. Now the present Soviet leaders blamed the whole obsolete anti-cosmopolitanism drive on Stalin's ghost.

They have loaded on to him responsibility for the Tito impasse—though they themselves had all had a hand in it—and for other things symptomatic of the increasing rigidity and paranoia of Stalin's declining years, or so entangled with his prestige that they could not be repudiated while he was still alive. Having learned from the great "Operation Re-write" which began in the late twenties that by writing history with the pistol, instead of the pen one could make Stalin's figure as big as he himself desired, they thought they could now use the same methods to reduce him to whatever size they should plan.

But to what size? Their own, lest they themselves be not big enough to rule? Cut him out altogether? Then by virtue of what authority could they still claim to be the rulers of a great nation? Who were they if not Stalin's men?

For three years they have been wrestling thus with his ghost, and still they have not prevailed. As when Jacob wrestled with an angel until his thigh was out of joint and the sinew shrank, so these men are forever lame—because they are Stalin's men. Laying a ghost is not so simple when the exorcists have been the ghost's own accomplices (some even say his murderers) and are now his heirs. They have held the heritage three years now, yet at the 20th Congress the one delegate overshadowing them all was the specter of Stalin.

FROM Stalin's deathbed council, a triumvirate emerged: Malenkov, Beria, Molotov. No novelty here, for during fourteen of his twenty years of personal party domination Lenin himself had covered his one-man rule with a succession of *troikas*: Lenin-Krassin-Bogdanov, Lenin-Bogdanov-Dubrovinsky, Lenin-Zinoviev-Kamenev, from 1914

to 1917 Lenin and Zinoviev alone. Wherever two or three were gathered together with Lenin there was Bolshevism. When Bogdanov disagreed with Lenin on electoral tactics, and Krassin disagreed with him on the inner party regime, they were simply excommunicated and a new, more complaisant *troika* formed, to edit the paper, run the groups abroad, instruct the underground in Russia. Stalin, too, had covered his rise to personal power under the appearance of a "collective leadership" of which he was but the "party wheelhorse." He, too, had had *troikas*: Zinoviev-Kamenev-Stalin, Bukharin-Rykov-Stalin. Only after 1929 was it the cult of Stalin alone, with its priests and adepts.

For nine days Malenkov was heir apparent: Premier and General Secretary, "Head of the Party and the Government." On the ninth day, "at his own request," he was "relieved" of the post of General Secretary. After two years, again "at his own request," he was "relieved" of the Premiership. Having confessed to "my guilt and responsibility for the unsatisfactory state of affairs in agriculture" (in other words, for Khrushchev's errors), and to his incompetence in local work and "inexperience in directing individual branches of the economy," he was made Minister of Power Stations.

Three months after Stalin's death the arrest of Beria took place. He was tried by "socialist legality"—no definite charges: four versions have been published; no representation by counsel; the Supreme Court, illegally, had only one Supreme Court Justice, the other "justices" being two generals, two trade union overseers, a party official, a Deputy Minister of the Interior, and the president of the Moscow City Court. Beria himself was not allowed to be present at his "trial," yet he "confessed" to having been an imperialist agent all his life, and was shot within twenty-four hours. No novelty here, either, except that it had taken Stalin thirteen years of experiment with the trials and confessions of non-Communists before he killed his first party comrade.

Two years and seven months after Stalin's

death, and five months before the 20th Congress, Molotov confessed that he had misled the party by failing to recognize socialism when he saw it! Exit the third triumvir. At the Congress, First Secretary Khrushchev felt it necessary to attack all three ex-triumvirs again—Beria by name, the other two by echoing their formulae of “confession.”

Beginning in Lenin's day with the 10th Congress in 1921, all Party Congresses have been preceded by a purge of dissidents (not necessarily bloody) which assured a majority to the line and leadership of the center. The 20th Congress was no exception. First came the fall of the *troika*, and the death of Beria and twenty-five others. Next, Khrushchev added two of his own men to the Presidium and three to the party Secretariat. Shatalin, a Stalin-Malenkov appointee, disappeared from the latter body. Then Khrushchev personally, or his Chief of Cadres, Aristov, went from republic to republic, region to region, city to city, changing First Party Secretaries and other high officials. The new Khrushchev appointees in turn changed their own subordinates. The changes, transfers, demotions, “criticism and self-criticism,” and disappearances in the six months preceding the Congress mounted into the thousands, but only in Georgia, so far as I know, and among Security officials, was the purge bloody.

The new top appointees come almost entirely from the old Moscow apparatus previously headed by Khrushchev and before him by Kaganovich, the old Ukrainian apparatus likewise headed first by Kaganovich and then Khrushchev, and from the Central Committee's administrative apparatus headed by Khrushchev. This purge culminated at the Congress, where 44 per cent of the members of the Central Committee elected at the 19th Congress were replaced. “Is it necessary to prove that the unity of the Party did not lose by that but only gained?” Khrushchev asked the delegates.

Khrushchev made the opening speech at the 20th Congress, delivered the over-all report (on all matters), was chairman of the Resolutions Committee, was elected chairman of the new RFSFR Bureau, delivered

the secret report on Stalin's ghost, made the closing speech. It took Stalin three or four Party Congresses before he got to a point of comparable domination. Yet commentators dutifully reported that the Congress was held under the aegis of “collective leadership”!

Of course, there may be reasons for Khrushchev's haste in monopolizing the stage. He is sixty-two, whereas Stalin took over the party machine when he was forty-three or forty-four. Khrushchev has no galaxy of stars, no outstanding Old Bolsheviks, to get rid of. He has taken over a party that, in his words, is now “more monolithic than ever.” And, unlike Stalin, he had no prior “theoretical” works to his credit. His 50,000-word address constitutes his first claim to the stature of interpreter and infallible exponent of sacred doctrine. The aging Stalin published his 50,000 words on the eve of the 19th Congress, on which occasion he distributed the role of reporter to the Congress among all the “sons,” speaking himself for only ten minutes. Secure in his patriarchal rule, he could allow a wide semblance of “collective leadership,” whereas the anxious parvenu leader on his way up simply had to lay down the line on everything.

IN OFFICIAL theory, the Congress is the “supreme body” that rules the party, lays down its line, decides all matters of principle, selects an Executive to carry out its will between sessions, and holds its “servants” to account for their stewardship. In practice, it is a sounding board for the party's real individual leaders and policy-makers.

Lenin saw to that from the beginning. Motivated by his belief in centralism, in an elite party, and above all his belief in himself, he set up a guardianship from the outset. Acting as a rule through his *troikas*, he appointed the organizers who were to set up the party's local bodies. These were returned to each congress as delegates, confirming the center that had appointed them. The congresses or committees that he could not

control, he split. That, in fact, was how Bolshevism was born and became a separate party.

Since whatever Lenin did was done in the name of and "by the working class," it became essential that he prove that all other working-class parties were "bourgeois."

At the 10th Congress in 1921 Lenin dealt the final blow to the authority of Party Congresses in general. Up to that time each Congress, since it was supposed to decide the party line, had been preceded by a free discussion period, after which delegates were supposed to be elected on the basis of their respective platforms. Having outlawed all other parties, Lenin was infuriated to find that working-class resentment of his dictatorial methods was taking the form of a "Workers Opposition" inside his own. He thereupon pushed through a measure outlawing the "Workers Opposition," the "Democratic Centralists," and the "Trade Union Opposition" as "bourgeois" and "petty bourgeois" factions, or as "representatives of alien class moods inside the Party." And at a secret closing session he had another measure pushed through permitting the Central Committee to expel any official elected by a Party Congress without waiting for sanction by a subsequent Congress. It was from this time on that Party Congresses became no more than sounding boards.

As a sounding board the 20th Congress was an unqualified success. Its fifteen hundred-odd hand-picked participants could not have entered—nor would they have dared enter—into a serious discussion of anything. But their presence and role as a Party Congress could give resonance to whatever the new boss and his associates wanted to amplify; and even withhold resonance from whatever it was desired to play down—with one exception: the struggle with Stalin's ghost.

Khrushchev reported on everything, did everything, was everything, but the sounding board continued to echo: "collective leadership."

Nine tenths of the "debates" were on how

to maintain the Stalinist line of "priority for heavy industry," and continue thereby to deprive the Russian people of even a modest reward for their unremitting toil; nay, it was a question of how to get a further speed-up. But correspondents must look for something new to report, so nine tenths of all the flood of talk went unreported except for the "novelty" of the seven-hour day or 40-hour week (to be introduced in the course of the next five years) and some contradictory talk about "greater equalization of pay" with greater "incentive pay for unequal production" and greater equalization of pensions. The seven-hour day had first been promised in 1927, to celebrate the tenth anniversary of the October Revolution. It was even written by Stalin into his Constitution of 1936, and proclaimed afresh to celebrate the thirtieth anniversary of October. In 1957 it will be proclaimed once more, to celebrate the fortieth! As Boris Souvarine has remarked, "Bolshevism has always been very expert in conjugating the future tense." What was really meant, however, has been summed up in a lapidary formula of Pervukhin's glossing Khrushchev's report:

Our Party has fought decisively, and is fighting against the anti-Leninist view . . . that heavy industry may ever cease to be our main task at any of the stages of Socialist construction.

Translated into plain speech, this means that *never* will butter take precedence over bombs, *never* will production for use ("socialism") take precedence over production for accumulation—that is, production for the power and wealth of the state, which means totalitarianism. Even Stalin himself never ventured to discount the future that heavily. Now the very existence of the future tense is being called into question. What is left then of Utopia?

In agriculture, too, the Stalinist line was not only continued at the 20th Congress, but sharpened and extended. Khrushchev had been Stalin's own "planner" (if that's the word for it) and taskmaster in agriculture, and it was his words that in 1948 had actually opened the attack on "the little worm of individual property that still sits in

the mind of the *kolkhoznik*." At that time Khrushchev set out to transform the *kolkhozes* by combining them into ever larger units, units so large that it would be possible to have every one of them directly "chaired" by a Communist chairman, immediately supervised by a Machine-Tractor unit, and intimately penetrated by a Communist cell. Before this drive began, the overwhelming majority of the *kolkhozes*, far from having party cells, had not even had a single party member. By January 1, 1950, the number of *kolkhozes* had been reduced to 254,000. By the 19th Congress in October 1952, this number had been cut to 97,000, of which 79 per cent had Communist party units. By the 20th Congress, the number was down to 87,371 *kolkhozes*, of which thirty thousand were newly captained by city Communists sent to them to be "elected" chairman. All but 8.4 per cent of the *kolkhozes* now had party units—and the drive is still continuing.

At the same time, Khrushchev has started a new agrarian revolution from above by his campaign to send out young people from the cities to put immense tracts of range and semi-arid land into cultivation and raise corn north, south, east and west, regardless of climate and other natural conditions.

However, the real body blow to the peasants of the Soviet Union was delivered more quietly, with the Congress sounding board muted. Not Khrushchev, but a delegate from Cherkassy Province, F. I. Dubkovetsky, got up to urge that

... it is necessary to reconsider the question of the participation of the collective farmers in the communal economy so that the collective farmer will work not a mere minimum of work days but throughout the entire year. . . . And life itself shows that the small parcels must be reduced to a common denominator, with one tenth of a hectare allotted per able-bodied person. . . .

Here was the voice of the "rank-and-file" peasant crying to be further driven and further expropriated! As soon as the Congress was adjourned and the sounding board dismantled, the *kolkhozniks* learned that

their "plea" had been heard. The Central Committee and the Council of Ministers published a decree in *Pravda* on March 10 declaring:

It is essential that the collective farmers' personal garden plots should be of subsidiary importance until the communal sector has been sufficiently developed to satisfy fully both . . . public needs and the *kolkhoznik's* personal needs, and the principal part of his income must stem from his participation in *kolkhoz* production, while his garden plot . . . should be of truly subsidiary importance . . . an embellishment of his way of life.

IT WAS in the field of foreign policy that the sounding board provided by the 20th Congress was most effective. A commonplace of the Litvinov "general disarmament" and "collective security" line, namely, that the "camp of peace" was strong enough to curb aggressors and therefore "war is not inevitable," was repeated word for word as "something new." Once upon a time Moscow's English-language *New Times* reported:

The speaker denied that war is inevitable, or the maintenance of peace impossible! . . . Those who say: "As long as capitalism exists, it is impossible to avoid war and hopeless and useless to fight to maintain peace," are either out and out doctrinaires or ordinary imposters!

The speaker was Georgi Dmitrov, "Helmsman of the Comintern." The place was Moscow. The date, May 1, 1936. The speech was delivered from Lenin's tomb. Standing behind the speaker and leading the applause ostentatiously was—Joseph Stalin!

What is really new in all this is the readiness of the refurbishers of this item to travel in order to sell it—which neither Lenin nor Stalin would do, nor needed to do. The present Moscow line on Tito is likewise a new gamble whose consequences are still unforeseeable, though, as Tito must know, the basic question is still the one that Lenin always asked: "*Kto kovo*—who uses whom?"

Closely related to the spirit of "Geneva," the drive to win favor in the neutralist countries, and the wooing of Tito, are the 20th Congress' pronouncements on an "alterna-

tive peaceful or parliamentary road to socialism." The enthusiasm which greeted these pronouncements when the first cable summaries arrived was chilled when people took the trouble to read in full Khrushchev's bowdlerized quotation from Lenin as well as the terrifying list he gave of "examples" of peaceful transition to socialism. The quotation turned out to be from a passage in which Lenin declared that "when socialism had conquered in a large country" its frightened small neighbors might be induced to yield without a struggle in order "to save their physical heads." The examples of "peaceful transition" turned out to be: Czechoslovakia, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Bulgaria, Rumania, Albania, Yugoslavia, and—China! Khrushchev explained—as if we didn't know it!—that Communists might be willing to take power by non-violent infiltration of "bourgeois" institutions, but he also made it clear they could not maintain and exercise that power without violence. They would have to "transform parliament from an organ of bourgeois democracy into an organ of the people's will" led by a "vanguard party, the Communist Party," and to establish a one-party dictatorship in the name of the proletariat. The "new line," as it was so well summarized by the late Peter Meyer, said in effect: "If you yield without resistance, we will not use force. If you resist, we will use force. So it is up to you to decide whether there is to be a rape, or a peaceful, voluntary yielding."

Nor only did the resonance of the sounding board make things introduced by Stalin's *epigoni* over the past three years appear to be fresh novelties; it lingered on to give added effect to pronouncements made after the Congress had adjourned. A most striking example is the projected cut in manpower of the armed forces of the USSR, which, in this writer's judgment, will be carried out seriously and in full. But this step could have been foreseen by any careful student of Soviet population statistics and labor plans. Last year, when I predicted a cut in the forced-labor camp population as

well as in the armed forces of the USSR, it was on the basis of those statistics and plans.*

So far, the labor deficit for an expanding industry, and for an agriculture that has been steadily depleted of its labor force, has been made good by the sizable "crop" of human beings that each year reached the working age of sixteen. But Dr. Naum Jasny, even before the announced reduction of Soviet military manpower, compiled a population table for the USSR after consultation with two other expert demographers, Eugene Kulischer and Warren Eason, which indicates that this source of new labor has been drying up. This table shows that the Soviet government *must* not only make a drastic cut in its armed forces right now, or else abandon its Sixth Five-Year Plan, but will have to make such a cut at least three times more, and much more drastically, in 1958, 1959, and 1960. Dr. Jasny's table is based on nothing made known at the 20th Congress, to which the first announcement of the cut in military manpower has been tied; nor can it be corrected, as Stalin corrected earlier census deficits, by having the census-takers shot as "wreckers." Here is part of the table as published in *Sotsialistichesky Vestnik* (April 1956, New York and Paris):

*Annual Working Force Increment
(Youths Reaching 16)*

1950	1,300,000
1951	1,300,000
1952	1,600,000
1953	2,600,000
1954	2,500,000
1955	2,400,000
1956	2,100,000

Nineteen-fifty to 1956 were the seven fat years, the last four being very fat indeed, for those who reached sixteen then had been born in the comparatively good years of 1937, 1938, 1939, 1940, when the lower ranks of the population, relatively unmolested by Stalin's great purges, found life a little better, married, and managed to bring up more children. The average for the four

*See this same writer's recently published *Six Keys to the Soviet System* (Beacon, pp. 146-7).

fattest years, 1953 to 1956, was roughly two and a half million new workers a year.

But then came the lean years, the years of the locust, the terrible years of the war. Men and women starved and died, fewer babies were born, and fewer survived.

Children Born in	Reach 16 in	Number Added to Labor Force
1941	1957	1,800,000
1942	1958	800,000
1943	1959	300,000
1944	1960	300,000

An annual increment of only 300,000 in a country with a population on the order of two hundred millions obviously cannot even make good the labor force's loss from invalidism, death, and superannuation, much less continue to swell it—and still less contribute the same quota of eighteen-year-olds to the army as before. So how can we make the decisions of a Party Congress responsible for a reduction in military force rendered obligatory by a population deficit? Is it not clear from Dr. Jasny's table that, regardless of what the free world does, the Kremlin will have to continue such reductions over the next three years? Either that, or give up—and, in any case, probably not fulfill—the Sixth Five-Year Plan?

IN SHORT: the "new men" in the Kremlin, on closer scrutiny, turn out to be not so new: they are still Stalin's men. The "collective leadership" turns out to have spawned a new *khozyain* (boss), if not yet *Vozhd*, who is manifestly "more equal than the others." They tried Beria and made him confess in true Stalinist fashion, and, as Stalin taught them, they have used Beria's corpse, and are now trying—oh irony!—to use Stalin's own as a scapegoat. The 20th Congress was prepared for, as were earlier Congresses, by a purge. Far from being a return to the frequently unruly discussions of Lenin's first years in power, or even of Stalin's first years, it proved to be "more monolithic than ever before." It neither chose new men nor adopted new measures. But, as sounding board, it was the most suc-

cessful of all Party Congresses—except for its failure to keep under control the unresolved struggle with Stalin's ghost.

Stalin's heirs are striving to get out of the shadow, to cast off the rigidities and mounting paranoia of his last years. They want to put the blame on the corpse for the last zigzag but one, but meanwhile they intend to continue Stalinism in industry and agriculture, and to push forward as before in the Stalinist war to re-make a people and win the world. While they exploit for propagandist ends the universal expectation of change on the death of a tyrant, and invoke a direct discipleship to Lenin such as they never possessed, they continue Stalinism without its obsolete features and paranoiac excesses.

Whether Stalin had lived or not, the time for a new zigzag or turn had come. It was initiated, even before his death, at the 19th Congress, and his *Economic Problems of Socialism in the USSR* pointed the way. That is not to say that each reversal of field in the pursuit of the same unchanging goal produces no novelties. But the *epigoni*, being smaller men who lack Stalin's terrible patience and demonic force, exhibit strikingly little originality in this latest turn of theirs. It has nothing comparable to the breadth and sweep of Lenin's turn from "War Communism" to the Nep; from immediate world revolution to peace pacts and "concessions to capitalist investors." Nor does it have the sweep of Stalin's—swing from "no bloodletting" to the great blood purge; from "defense of the peasant" to forced collectivization; from "social fascism" to the "People's Front." Nor anything of the magnitude and lightning surprises of the triple zigzag from "collective security" to a pact with Hitler, then to Grand Alliance, then to Cold War. The *epigoni* demonstrate that they are *epigoni* by the smallness, the imitativeness of what they do, by their borrowing of trivial and fragmentary features from previous maneuvers, and utilization of mutilated passages from the very same texts and formulations which accompanied these maneuvers. It is the

world's unthinking expectation of change and its weariness of a tension which will have to be maintained as long as the causes of it have not disappeared—it is the pathetic eagerness of the outside world to be deceived that magnifies these tired and trivial maneuvers into something big and portending change.

Where genuine novelty does lie, however, is in an operation the new leaders of the USSR planned but seem to have been unable to control: the effort to assure their succession by a gradual deflation of Stalin's ghost. Because they cannot draw a line between his "crimes" and his "great conquests"; because they cannot apologize to some of his—and their own—corpses without having a whole army of skeletons force their way into the strange dance of death; because their regime of absolute force, having downgraded the police, finds that it has upgraded the army; because an aging party headed by an even older leadership is hold-

ing down a country where new class formations and new generations demand a place; because these exorcists are the disciples, the heirs, and the accomplices of the ghost they are attempting to exorcise; and because their hinted plea that they were but the intimidated minions of a madman, so reminiscent of the alibis of Hitler's fallen entourage, raises the question whether any system which puts absolute power in the hands of a madman may not itself have something paranoid about it that corrupts the spirit and unhinges the mind—for all these reasons the future appears pregnant with surprises, and the position of Khrushchev and his associates insecure.

In any case, it is no service to the hapless people over whom they rule, or to the freedom and peace of the world which they perpetually threaten, to write these men larger than they are, or to fall for the din of the not too clever propaganda that emerged from their 20th Party Congress.

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Good Friend and Valued Contributor